

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L RABAT 4819

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SUBJECT: AMB SCHAUFLE'S TALK WITH BOUABID

CREFS: (A) USUN 3553; (B) RABAT 4717

1. WE BELIEVE IT WOULD BE USEFUL TO STAY IN TOUCH WITH BOUABID DURING HIS US VISIT AND THAT AMB SCHAUFLE'S EXPECTED DISCUSSION WITH HIM COULD PRODUCE INTERESTING INSIGHTS ON INTERNAL DEVELOPMENTS HERE. FOLLOWING IS BACKGROUND FOR AMB SCHAUFLE ON CURRENT INTERNAL POLITICAL SITUATION.

2. SINCE 1972 SPLIT OF UNFP, BOUABID HAS BEEN REGARDED AS MOST UNCOMPROMISING AND MOST CREDIBLE OF MOROCCO'S MAJOR OPPOSITION FIGURES. ARREST OF UNFP/RABAT (BOUABID'S GROUP) LEADERS IN THE WAKE OF MARCH 1973 DISORDERS AND CLOSING OF GROUP'S OFFICES BY GOVERNMENT REINFORCED THIS IMAGE. FROM 1973 UNTIL THIS SUMMER ABOUT ONLY PUBLIC MENTION MADE OF BOUABID WAS WHEN HE APPEARED AS DEFENSE LAWYER IN POLITICAL TRIALS. IN PRIVATE, HE WAS UNIFORMLY CRITICAL OF REGIME AND PESSIMISTIC ABOUT FUTURE. BY CONTRAST, HIS RIVAL IBRAHIM OF UNFP/CASABLANCA, THOUGH PRIVATELY CRITICAL, AT LEAST COULD CONDUCT PARTY BUSINESS OPENLY AND HAD NO COLLEAGUES IN JAIL. HE WAS THEREFORE CONSIDERED MORE IN FAVOR WITH THE REGIME.

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3. IN PAST FEW MONTHS PERCEPTIONS OF BOUABID HAVE CHANGED

AND HE IS NOW CHARGED BY MORE MILITANT ELEMENTS WITH BEING MEMBER OF "PALACE OPPOSITION." PRINCIPAL REASON FOR CHANGE WAS HIS AGREEMENT TO PARTICIPATE IN SAHARA CAMPAIGN AND CONSEQUENT PUBLIC EXPOSURE. ALSO, LAST PROMINENT UNFP/RABAT LEADERS STILL IN JAIL WERE RELEASED FOLLOWING BOUABID'S RETURN FROM ASIAN TOUR IN SAHARA CAUSE, AND GROUP WAS PERMITTED TO HOLD MEETING WHICH WAS PUBLICIZED IN SEMI-OFFICIAL PRESS. THUS, BOUABID WAS "RESPECTABLE" AGAIN AND IBRAHIM, WHO MAINTAINS HE REFUSED PARTICIPATE IN SAHARA CAMPAIGN, APPEARED TO BE IN TRUE, IF LONELY, OPPOSITION. ONE SOURCE CLAIMS SPLIT IS ALREADY DEVELOPING IN BOUABID'S GROUP WITH SOME OF THOSE JAILED IN 1973 CHARGING THAT HE PROSTITUTED HIMSELF WITH PALACE. BOUABID'S ARGUMENT THAT HE PLAYED BALL ON SAHARA ONLY TO OBTAIN HIS COLLEAGUES' RELEASE HAS FALLEN ON DEAF EARS, ACCORDING THIS SOURCE.

4. MEETING OF BOUABID'S GROUP COMPLETED SPLIT OF UNFP/RABAT AND UNFP/CASABLANCA WITH FORMER BECOMING USFP (SOCIALIST UNION OF POPULAR FORCES). USFP MEMBERS WITH WHOM WE HAVE DISCUSSED MEETING CONTENT THAT BOUABID, AND THEY, ARE AS MILITANT AS EVER. THEY DENY THAT THERE WAS DEAL ON RELEASE OF PRISONERS OR THAT THERE IS ANY REAL DIALOGUE YET WITH PALACE ON COUNTRY'S POLITICAL FUTURE. NEW PARTY, THEY SAY, WILL SEEK TO TIGHTEN ITS DISCIPLINE AND TO GAIN AS MUCH SUPPORT AS POSSIBLE FROM UNFP MILITANTS THROUGHOUT COUNTRY.

5. IN TALKING WITH BOUABID, ONE COULD POINT OUT THAT FORMAL SPLIT OF UNFP APPEARS VICTORY FOR PALACE'S DIVIDE AND RULE POLICY AND TO ASK HIM HOW HE SEES USFP'S CHANCES IN VYING FOR SUPPORT OF UNFP MILITANTS. IT WOULD ALSO BE INTERESTING TO KNOW WHETHER USFP HOPES TO GAIN SIGNIFICANT UMT SUPPORT, GIVEN APPARENTLY SOLID RELATIONS BETWEEN IBRAHIM AND BEN SEDDIK. ALSO, BOUABID DOUBTLESS HAS VIEWS ABOUT KING'S LATEST DATE FOR ELECTIONS (OCTOBER 1975) AND PROPOSAL THAT POLITICAL LEADERS PARTICIPATE AS MINISTERS WITHOUT PORTFOLIO IN GOVERNMENT THAT WOULD PREPARE FOR THESE ELECTIONS. IN THIS CONNECTION, IT WOULD BE WORTH INQUIRING IF THERE HAS BEEN ANY MOVE ON PALACE'S PART TO

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REOPEN POLITICAL DIALOGUE. (THIS IS UNLIKELY SINCE KING GAVE NEW DATE FOR ELECTIONS IN SEPT 17 PRESS CONFERENCE AND BOUABID LEFT FOR NEW YORK ONLY SIX DAYS LATER.) FINALLY, ISTIQLAL HAS RESTATED ITS CONTINUED ADHERENCE TO NATIONAL FRONT (ISTIQLAL/UNFP), AND IT WOULD BE USEFUL TO ASK HOW BOUABID VIEWS FUTURE OF THIS COALITION.

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